



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK
P.O. BOX 129
GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA 86023-0129



IN REPLY REFER TO:

D18 (GRCA 8219)

JUN 28 2005

Dear Interested Party:

Subject: Hermit Road Rehabilitation

Reference: Request for Comments on Proposal (General Scoping)

The National Park Service (NPS) is continuing the planning process for the rehabilitation of Hermit Road, the roadway that connects Grand Canyon Village to Hermits Rest along the west rim of Grand Canyon National Park. Hermit Road is a two-lane paved road approximately eight miles long, which includes approximately 7 miles of main roadway and approximately 1 mile of scenic overlook access roads and parking areas (Enclosure).

NPS initiated the public scoping process for this project in June 2004 with the request for comments on several preliminary alternatives under consideration for rehabilitation of the road. Based on the input received from the public, other agencies and groups, and from continued internal scoping with NPS staff, the park has refined the objectives for the project and has developed a more detailed project proposal that more adequately addresses the purpose and need for the project and the objectives for taking action. The preliminary alternatives described in the June 2004 scoping letter are no longer under consideration, as previously described.

Hermit Road and its associated overlooks and parking areas are historic, designed and constructed in 1934/35 by the Civilian Conservation Corps and Bureau of Public Roads and retain a high degree of integrity. However, the overall road condition is poor and does not meet current safety standards. It is too narrow for safe passage of buses, especially when bicyclists and pedestrians are on the road. Pedestrian and bicycle use occurs on the road, in part because the existing trails are not adequate to support both pedestrians and bicycles and in some areas there simply is not enough room between the roadway and the edge of the canyon rim for an adequate trail. However, many park visitors choose to walk or bike between scenic overlooks along Hermit Road. Pedestrian and bicycle use, combined with shuttle buses, tour buses and other vehicle traffic on this narrow two-lane road, creates a safety hazard. In addition, the lack of adequate maintenance is threatening the historic integrity of the road.

Purpose and Need for Action - There is a need for improving the road surface to provide for safe bus operations and for improving the bicyclist and pedestrian experience in this area by providing a safe means of access for all visitors to Hermits Rest, while also maintaining the road's rural character and historic integrity. The following project objectives were identified to address these needs:

TAKE PRIDE[®]
IN AMERICA 

1. Minimize disturbance to the natural and cultural environment and restore areas damaged by social trailing and other impacts, to the extent practical, using native species.
2. Improve the visitor experience along Hermit Road by:
 - Retaining the historic character of the road, overlooks and trail.
 - Improving the condition of the road and overlooks.
 - Increasing the road width to accommodate buses
 - Providing safe access for pedestrians along the rim from the Village to Hermits Rest thereby minimizing social trailing.
 - Providing safe access for bicyclists to overlooks, viewpoints and Hermits Rest
 - Improving overlooks and parking to meet current Americans with Disabilities Act standards

Project Proposal (Enclosure 2) – To meet the purpose and need for taking action and these objectives, NPS has developed a preliminary project proposal. Under this proposal, Hermit Road would be widened up to 23 -24 feet to provide two 11-foot-wide vehicle lanes and two, 6-inch to 1-foot shoulders on each side of the road. Road width would be increased by 3 to 6 feet and would continue to provide two-way bus traffic, with no changes in current bus operations. The proposal would create a two-way bicycle/pedestrian trail, called a Greenway, between Grand Canyon Village and Hermits Rest. From the Village to Maricopa Point the Greenway would be just south of Hermit Road, separated visually from the roadway by a narrow vegetated buffer ranging from 10 feet to 75 feet. The Greenway distance from the roadway would depend on existing landscape features and slope. It would cross to the north side of the road at Maricopa Point and would proceed around the Orphan Mine to Powell Point. From this location to just past the Abyss, the Greenway would again be located on the south side of the road. From this point on, the trail would follow the alignment of the old 1912 wagon route north of Hermit Road to Pima Point and would remain on the rim side of Hermit Road to Hermits Rest. The trail would be paved and would be approximately 8-10 feet wide. Connections to all viewpoints currently accessed by shuttle buses would be provided between Grand Canyon Village and the Abyss, requiring numerous bicycle/pedestrian road crossings. In addition, connections would be provided to most pullouts.

Greenway users would be expected to 'share the road' with other vehicles at overlook areas such as Powell, Hopi, Mohave and Pima Points. In addition, improvements to overlook parking areas and access roads would be considered, as needed, to improve circulation, safety and accessibility for pedestrians, buses, bicyclists and other vehicles, where appropriate.

The proposal would include minimal improvements to the unpaved trail from Powell Point to the area where the old 1912 wagon route intersects with the trail, west of the Abyss. Improvements would include designation of a single trail, with obliteration of other social trails; vegetation removal / trimming as needed; stone / boulder retaining at steep areas where the trail is sloughing; and stone steps in steep areas. In addition, there are five areas along the roadway, where the rim and roadway are too close, forcing hikers to use the roadway. In these locations (at existing historic pull offs), the roadway will be widened to provide a 4' designated pedestrian area between existing pullout walls and vehicle travel lanes.

We Invite Your Comments –The project proposal described above is a preliminary option currently under consideration and is subject to change. We invite any issues or concerns you may have with the project proposal at this time, to ensure that we identify all of the relevant issues and are able to develop a reasonable range of alternatives for analysis in the Environmental

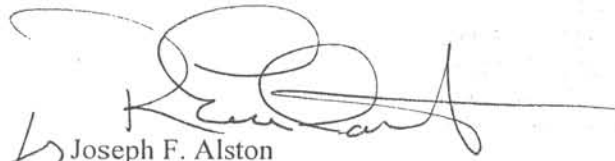
Assessment (EA). The EA will include a detailed analysis of impacts to park resources from implementing the project proposal and any other action alternatives developed based on the issues raised, including an analysis of taking no action. Once the analysis of all alternatives is complete, NPS will select a preferred alternative for implementation and will distribute the EA for public review, prior to making a decision. Please send your comments to the address below, or email Sara White, Compliance Officer, at sara_white@nps.gov no later than **August 19, 2005**.

Superintendent
Grand Canyon National Park
Attn: Sara White, Compliance Officer
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023

Please be aware that names and addresses of respondents may be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. Anonymous comments may be included in the public record. However, the National Park Service is not legally required to consider or respond to anonymous comments.

We appreciate your input on this proposal. If you have any questions regarding the project, please call Debbie Lutch, Natural Resource Specialist, at (928) 774-0095 or Vicky Stinson, Project Manager, at (928) 774-3026.

Sincerely,

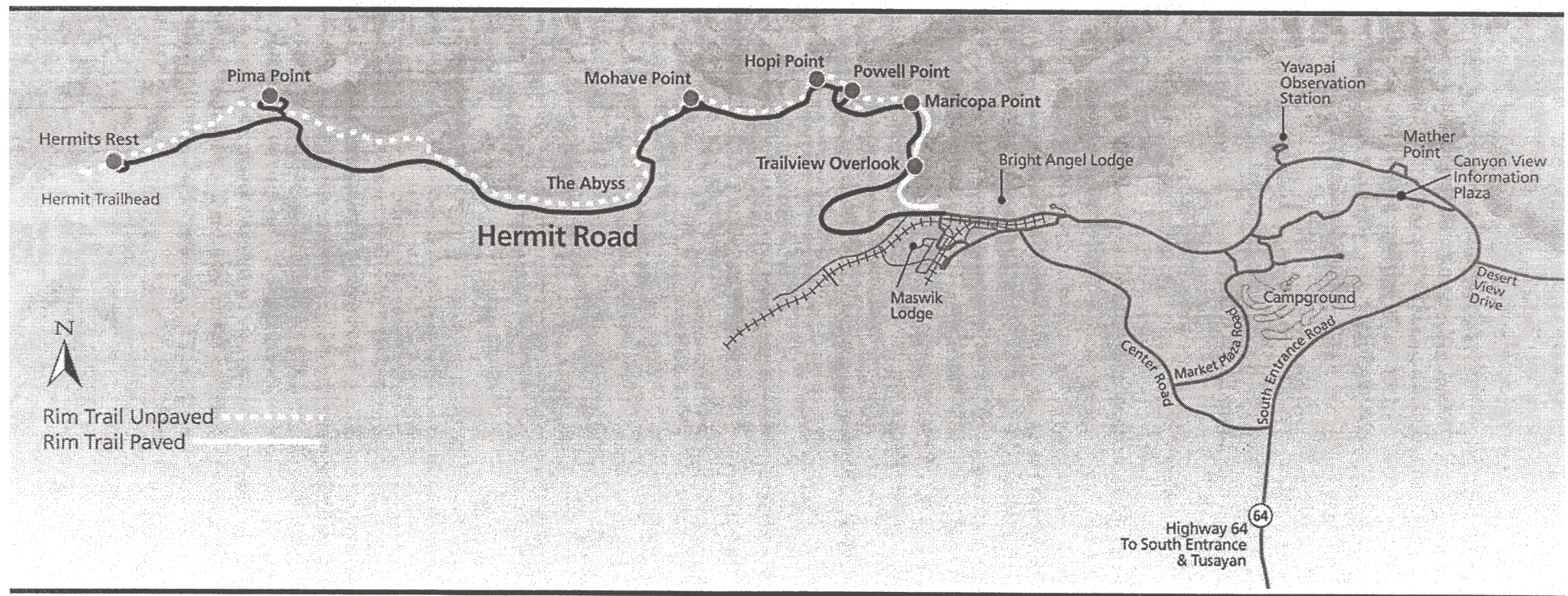


Joseph F. Alston
Superintendent

Enclosures (2)

If you would like to receive a hard copy of the environmental assessment (EA) for this project when it is complete, please contact Sara White at the address above, at (928) 638-7956, or at sara_white@nps.gov, and one will be sent to you during the comment period. If you already indicated your request for an EA during the June 2004 scoping effort, you do not need to respond again. If you did not respond to this request in June 2004 and you do not respond to this current request, a hard copy of the EA will not be sent to you. However, please be aware that this EA and other environmental documents are routinely available for your review on the Grand Canyon National Park website at www.nps.gov/grca/compliance/

Enclosure 1. Project Area Map
Hermit Road, South Rim, Grand Canyon National Park



REG	STATE	PROJECT	SHEET NO.
INTER MTN	AZ	PRA-GRCA 15(1) HERMIT ROAD	X.X



12:07:33 PM N:\AZ\grca15(1)\Roadway\design\work\supporting_dgn\Alt_greenway B.dgn

7/11/2005